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Revamped Victims' Compensation Program moves to Attorney General's Office

Wilmington, DE – The Delaware Attorney General's Office today applauded Governor Markell for signing House Bill 253. This legislation, signed into law last Friday, transfers the Victims' Compensation Assistance Program to the Department of Justice, streamlines the compensation process for innocent victims of crime, and provides Delawareans statewide with local access to victim compensation services.

"We welcome the addition of the Victims' Compensation Assistance Program to the Delaware Department of Justice," stated Chief Deputy Attorney General Richard S. Gebelein. "We are working swiftly to implement this legislation in order to enhance critical statewide support to innocent victims of crime."

Governor Jack Markell stated, "Victims of violent crime deserve to be fairly compensated. This new law increases the state's efforts to help victims heal and rebuild their lives."

The Victims' Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP), formerly called the Violent Crimes Compensation Board, is funded through penalties paid by individuals convicted of a criminal act or adjudicated as a delinquent.

The revamped VCAP is comprised of:

- An Executive Director and other professional staff charged with reviewing and awarding claims for financial compensation made by innocent victims of crime.
- A newly-established Advisory Council whose members will include representatives from the Attorney General's Office, Victim's Rights Task Force, Domestic Violence Task Force, Sexual Assault Network of Delaware, the medical profession, the mental health profession, law enforcement, as well as members of the public from the City of Wilmington, New Castle County, Kent County, and Sussex County. The Council is charged with serving in an advisory capacity and developing rules and regulations for the VCAP.
- An Appeals Board, consisting of five members appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate, which has the authority to affirm, reverse or modify VCAP compensation decisions and participate in the awarding emergency assistance.

Through its integration into the Delaware Department of Justice, VCAP information and services will be available to the public through the Department's three offices in Wilmington, Dover, and Georgetown. VCAP services complement the Department's existing Victim/Witness Services Program, whose social workers and administrative staff support victims of crime and their families by

providing notification of scheduled events relating to criminal prosecutions, referral services, and assistance with the criminal justice process.

House Bill 253 was sponsored by Representative John A. Kowalko (Newark South) and Senator David Sokola (Newark).

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